1-Mr. Belmont - Encl.
1-Mr. Rosen - Encl.
1-Mr. Sullivan - Encl.
1-Mr. Malley - Encl.

105-82555 — 1904

REC-117

February 7, 1964

By Courier Service

Honorable J. Lee Rankin
General Counsel
The President's Commission
200 Maryland Avenue, Northeast
Washington, D. C. 20002

FEB 14 1964

Dear Mr. Rankin:

Reference is made to your letter of February 4, 1964, inquiring as to the basis for the conclusions with respect to the identification of the bullets and cartridge cases in this matter and concerning the metal fragments from the President's head.

Firearms identifications such as those made on the bullet and cartridge case evidence in the Oswald matter are based upon a microscopic study of the individual characteristic markings impressed in the surfaces of the bullets and cartridge cases by the mechanism of the weapon and upon a microscopic comparison of these markings with those produced on test specimens fired from the suspected weapon. Since the markings left by a weapon on a bullet or cartridge case are characteristic of that weapon, a suspected bullet or cartridge case bearing such markings, in general, can definitely be identified as having been fired from a particular weapon. These identifications are thus based on sound scientific principles which have been accepted in court for many years.

The metal fragments from the President's head are very small pieces of lead which bear no markings that could be used for identification purposes and, therefore, there is no basis on which they could definitely be associated with any weapon. It is noted in this regard that the rifle bullets involved in this matter consisted of a lead core surrounded by a copper alloy jacket; the identifying marks left by a gun barrel in such a situation appear only on the metal jacket and not on the lead core or fragments of the lead core.

Tolson
Belmont
Mohr
Casper
Callahan
Conrad
DeLoach
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(see note on page 3)

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Section 97

Honorable J. Lee Rankin

In the list of specimens on page one of your letter, it was noted that specimen Q8 was described as a cartridge case. Actually, this specimen was described in Special Agent Gemberling's report dated November 30, 1963, as a cartridge and is in fact an unfired cartridge.

Sincerely yours,

J. Edgar Hoover

NOTE: The bullet found on the stretcher at the hospital, specimen Q1, and the large bullet fragments, Q2 and Q3, found in the President's automobile were identified in the Laboratory as having been fired from the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle submitted in this case and which was identified as belonging to Oswald. The three cartridge cases found in the Texas School Book Depository Building were definitely identified in the Laboratory as having been fired in the submitted rifle. Several cartridge cases recovered in connection with the shooting of Officer Tippett were identified as having been fired in the .38 Special Smith and Wesson revolver, SN V510210.

The tiny lead fragments removed from the President's head bore no markings suitable for identification purposes. To further our study in respect to these small fragments, a spectrographic examination was made of them and they were found to be composed of a bullet alloy comparable in composition to the core of the fragments from the President's automobile; however, this is not sufficient to definitely establish that they are from a bullet fired from Oswald's gun.